

Health Insurance Reform

DAILY MYTHBUSTER: Impact on Seniors

Health insurance reform opponents, including Congresswoman Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, continue to spread myths about [America's Affordable Health Choices Act](#)'s impact on seniors. The facts about health insurance reform disprove her comments, and independent organization decry efforts to scare Americans who want the reform embodied by America's Affordable Health Choices Act.

Myth: *The Republican reform effort, unlike the Democrats proposal, "is pro-life because it will not put seniors in a position of being put to death by their government."*
– Congresswoman Virginia Foxx
[\[7/28/09\]](#)

Fact: America's Affordable Health Choices Act extends Medicare coverage to cover the cost of patients voluntarily speaking with their doctors about their values and preferences regarding end-of-life care—empowering older Americans on this critical issue. These are deeply personal decisions that take thoughtful consideration, and it is only appropriate that doctors be compensated for their time.

· Advance planning consultations are not mandatory; this benefit is completely voluntary. The provision merely provides coverage under Medicare to have a conversation once every five years if – and only if – a patient wants to make his or her wishes known to a doctor. If desired, patients may have consultations more frequently if they are chronically ill or if their health status changes.

· There is no mandate in the bill to complete an advance care directive or living will. If a patient chooses to complete an advance directive or order for life sustaining treatment, these documents will help articulate a full range of treatment preferences, from full and aggressive treatment to limited, comfort care only. Patients that choose to have these documents and can customize them so that their wishes are appropriately reflected.

· There are no government-chosen professionals involved. The legislation simply allows Medicare to pay for a conversation between patients and their doctors.

That is why independent organizations and news outlets are criticizing opponents' scare tactics :

The *Associated Press* wrote, “Confusing claims and outright distortions have animated the national debate over changes in the health care system. Opponents of proposals by President Barack Obama and congressional Democrats falsely claim that government agents will force elderly people to discuss end-of-life wishes

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THE FACTS

: The bill would require Medicare to pay for advance directive consultations with health care professionals. But

it would not require anyone to use the benefit

... Patients and their families would consult with health professionals, not government agents, if they used the proposed benefit.

[\[8/02/09\]](#)

In an editorial, “Health care scare talk doesn’t help the debate,” the *Greensboro News Record*, in Congressman Foxx’s home state, said of Foxx’s comments: “Some of the rhetoric over health care is frightening , with the president’s critics sounding alarms about costs, government takeovers, “socialized medicine,” rationing and now even death... Discussions about this tremendously important issue need to be rational and well-informed

. Foxx’s comments didn’t meet those criteria

... A provision in a House bill authored by Democrats would require Medicare to pay for counseling on end-of-life issues, including living wills.

No one would be forced to have such counseling

, let alone to make any particular decisions.

Nothing authorizes the government to put people to death

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[\[7/31/09\]](#)

Trusted senior groups such as the AARP are supporting insurance reform because “This measure would not only help people make the best decisions for themselves, but also better ensure that their wishes are followed ... To suggest otherwise is a gross, and even cruel, distortion ...”
[\[7/24/09\]](#)

**Bi-Partisan Criticism Busts Myths About End of Life Care:
Republican Senator: ‘How someone could take an end of life directive or a living will as [euthanasia] is nuts’**

Some health insurance reform opponents have tried to spread myths about the [end of life provisions](#) of [America’s Affordable Health Choices Act](#) to stop the debate about health insurance reform. The facts continue to disprove the myths.

Republican Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia, who has introduced similar provisions in the Senate, said: “ How someone could take an end of life directive or a living will as [euthanasia] is nuts . You’re putting the authority in the individual rather than the government ... It empowers you to be able to make decisions at a difficult time rather than having the government making them for you.

...The problem you got is that there's so much swirling around about health care and people are taking bits and pieces out of this . This was thoroughly debated in the Senate committee. It's voluntary . Every state in America has an end of life directive or durable power of attorney provision...”
[\[8/11/09\]](#)

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Republicans, news outlets and independent organizations such as the AARP are criticizing opponents' scare tactics, debunked their claims and lauded the bill's provision.

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The [Associated Press agrees](#) : This myth is now busted.